

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

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SUBJ: REACTION IN INDIA TO THE US- SOVIET SUMMIT

BEGIN SUMMARY: ALONG WITH THE EXTENSIVE AND GENERALLY FAVORABLE INDIAN PRESS COMMENT ON THE US- SOVIET SUMMIT, THREE ASPECTS OF THE REACTION HERE WERE PARTICULARLY STRIKING: THE INTERPLAY WITH MRS. GANDHI' S TRIP TO YUGOSLAVIA AND CANADA; THE ANNOYANCE OF LOCAL MOSCOW- LINE COMMUNISTS AND SOVIET DIPLOMATS OVER MRS. GANDHI' S FAILURE TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN THE US AND USSR IN STATEMENTS ON GREAT- POWER HEGEMONY; AND CONCERN HERE THAT US- SOVIET RAPPROCHEMENT MIGHT WORK AGAINST THE INTEREST OF SMALL AND MEDIUM POWERS (READ INDIA). END SUMMARY.

1. AT THE CONCLUSION OF MRS. GANDHI' S VISIT TO YUGOSLAVIA, THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INDIAN PRESS REPORTED FROM BELGRADE THAT SHE AND TITO HAD DISCUSSED THE WASHINGTON SUMMIT; THEY WERE BOTH OF THE VIEW THAT AN UNDER-
STANDING BETWEEN THE BIG POWERS SHOULD NOT BE AT THE COST OF NON-
ALIGNED OR SMALLER COUNTRIES. A " HINDUSTAN TIMES" CORRESPONDENT
THOUGHT

IT SIGNIFICANT THAT THESE MISGIVINGS WERE SOUNDED ON THE EVE OF BREZH

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NEV' S DEPARTURE FOR WASHINGTON DESPITE THE EXCELLENT TIES BETWEEN
DELHI AND MOSCOW. HE NOTED IN THIS REGARD THAT ON JUNE 15 VIET
DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER AND FORMER AMBASSADOR TO INDIANLEGOV HAD
SAID, IN A STATEMENT WIDELY REPORTED HERE: " AT NO NEGOTIATING TABLE
OR
CONFERENCE WOULD THE SOVIET UNION EVER SACRIFICE THE INTERESTS OF
INDIA AND OTHER DEVELOPING COUNTRIES".

2. MRS. GANDHI DEVELOPED HERE THEME FURTHER IN

A JUNE 19 ADDRESS TO THE CANADIAN PARLIAMENT: THE MORE REALISTIC RE-
LATIONS BETWEEN THE GREAT POWERS MIGHT BE " YET ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO
REINFORCE THE OLD CONCEPT OF BALANCE OF POWER". " WE MUST BE VIGILANT
AGAINST BIG POWER ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CREATION OF NEW SPHERES OF
INFLUENCE. THE ONLY SAFEGUARD AGAINST BIG- POWER HEGEMONY IS FOR
THE
SMALLER NATIONS TO STAND TOGETHER". " COUNTRIES LIKE CANADA AND INDIA
WHICH HAVE NO TERRITORIAL AMBITIONS, NO ECONOMIC EMPIRES TO PROTECT,
AND NO IDEOLOGIES TO EXPORT CAN TAKE A LESS SELF- REGARDING AND MORE
FAR-
SEEKING VIEW OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS". THIS GOT A BIG PLAY IN THE
PRESS
HERE WITH HEADLINES SUCH AS " PM SEES PERIL IN BIG POWERS' INFLUENCE
ZONES".

3. G. K. REDDY SAID IN THE " HINDU" THAT WHILE WESTERN DIPLOMATS DIS-
MISSED THESE OBSERVATIONS AS INDIAN RHETORIC AND MORALIZING, THE
COMMUNIST ENVOYS HERE THOUGHT THE REMARKS WERE ADDRESSED AS
MUCH TO
THE SOVIET UNION AS THE US AND WERE NOT AT ALL AMUSED WITH THE
ATTEMPTS
TO EQUATE THE TWO COUNTRIES. WE HAD SIMILAR FEED BACK FROM EASTERN
EUROPEAN CONTACTS. A SOVIET DIPLOMAT TOLD US HIS EMBASSY HAD A RIGHT
TO BE TICKED OFF WHEN THE HEAD OF A GOVERNMENT THE USSR HELPED SO
MUCH
IN 1971 MADE SUCH STATEMENTS.

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4. COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA SPOKESMAN BUPESH GUPTA PUT OUT A
SCANTHING ATTACK ON MRS.
GANDHI' S OTTAWA REMARKS IN THE PARTY ORGAN, " NEW AGE". REMINDING
HER OF THE SEVENTH FLEET AND THE US STAND ON BANGLADESH, KASHMIR,
AND

GOA, GUPTA MAINTAINED THAT " SOVIET POLICY IS NOT ONE OF HEGEMONY AND INDIA KNOWS IT ONLY TOO WELL FROM HER OWN EXPERIENCE". ACCORDING TO

G. K. REDDY, CONGRESS RADICALS AND THEIR COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA FRIENDS WERE APPALLED BY THE PRIME MINISTER' S LATEST ATTEMPTS TO EQUATE THE US AND USSR.

5. A LEITMOTIF IN THE MOSCOW- LINE PRESS HERE HAS BEEN THAT IT IS FINE FOR THE USSR TO CONCLUDE AGREEMENTS WITH THE US. THESE WILL BENEFIT THE WHOLE WORLD AND THE USSR CAN TAKE CARE OF ITSELF. BUT IT WOULD POSE A DANGER TO SOCIALISM IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY LIKE INDIA IF IT WERE DRAWN BACK INTO THE US WEB.

6. TAKING BOTH MRS. GANDHI AND T. N. KAUL TO TASK, BUPESH GUPTA HAMMERED AWAY AT THIS THEME IN A RECENT " NEW AGE" ARTICLE: " IMPERIALISTS HAVE TO RECKON WITH THE TREMENDOUS INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE AS WELL AS THE ECONOMIC AND MILITARY MIGHT OF THE SOVIET UNION. THE SAME FACTOR DOES NOT WORK WITH THE AMERICAN IMPERIALISTS IN THEIR BEHAVIOR TOWARDS INDIA. IT IS ONLY BY STRENGTHENING INDIA' S FIGHT AGAINST IMPERIALISM THAT WE CAN MAKE THE US BEHAVE A LITTLE BETTER TOWARDS US AND NOT OTHERWISE, MOST CERTAINLY NOT BY MISCONCEIVED DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL OVERTURES WHICH HAVE BECOME A FASHION IN OUR OFFICIAL CIRCLES". WE ASKED SOVIET DIPLOMATS HERE IF THEY AGREE WITH THIS. THEY JUST ROLLED THEIR EYES.

7. EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY OFFICIALS HAVE VOICED SOME CONCERN TO US THAT THE US AND USSR WOULD NOW BE LESS BOTHERED ABOUT THE INTERESTS OF SMALL AND MEDIUM POWERS. THIS CONCERN WAS ALSO REFLECTED IN A JUNE

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STATEMENT BY THE MINISTRY SPOKESMAN WELCOMING THE BREZHNEV/ NIXON AGREEMENTS: INDIA HAD ALWAYS ADVOCATED PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE; IT WAS HAPPY TO NOTE THESE TRENDS AMONG THE BIG POWERS, PARTICULARLY THE US AND USSR; BUT INDIA MAINTAINS ALL COUNTRIES BIG AND SMALL SHOULD BE SAFE-

GUARDED AND NO ARRANGEMENTS SHOULD BE BROUGHT ABOUT AT THE
EXPENSE OF
OTHER COUNTRIES.

8. THE MEA JOINT SECRETARY FOR SOVIET AFFAIRS TOLD US RATHER
SYNICALLY HE DOUBTED THE
SOVIETS WOULD BE TOO CONCERNED ABOUT THE INDIAN REACTION TO THE
SUMMIT: THE SOVIETS HAD NEVER WORRIED MUCH ABOUT SENSIBILITIES
IN THE MIDDLE EAST WHERE THEY HAD BPOGER FISH TO FRY. JUDGING
FROM THE WORRIED COMMENTS TO US BY SOVIET OFFICIALS BEFORE AND
DURING THE VISIT,
HOWEVER, WE SUSPECT THIS REMARK CONVEYED INDIAN PIQUE MORE
THAN AN ACCURATE REFLECTION OF SOVIET ATTITUDES.

9. THE JUNE 28 DELHI PRESS, FOR EXAMPLE, GAVE FAIRLY EXTENSIVE
COVERAGE TO REMARKS IN MOSCOW BY SOVIET DEPUTY FOREIGN
MINISTER FIRYUBIN TO AN INDIAN MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT: INDIA
COULD RELY ON SOVIET STRENGTH AND FREINDSHIP TO WARD OFF ANY
THREAT TO PEACE; THE SOVIET UNION WOULD USE ITS INFLUENCE TO
SEE THAT AN UNHAPPY SITUATION DID NOT DEVELOP IN THE SUB- CONTINENT;
DETENTE DID NOT AFFECT SOVIET OBLIGATIONS TO OTHER COUNTRIES;
CHINA AIMED TO SOW DISCORD IN THE THIRD WORLD AND ITS REACTION
TO THE SUMMIT WAS DISAPPOINTING.

10. AS FOR MRS. GANDHI, THERE WAS A NOTABLE MODULATION IN HER
COMMENTS ON THE SUMMIT WHEN SHE ARRIVED IN DELHI JUNE 27:
SHE HOPED THE NIXON- BREZHNEV MEETING WOULD LEAD TO DETENTE ALL
AROUND AND THOUGHT THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE US- USSR ACCORD
NEED NOT NECESSARILY BE BAD FOR SMALLER NATIONS.

11. COMMENT: WHAT WE SEE IN ALL THIS IS SOME ANXIETY ON INDIA' S
PART THAT THE SOVIET COMMITMENT TO THIS COUNTRY MIGHT BE UNDERMINED
BY THE NEW UNDERSTANDINGS WITH WASHINGTON. ONE MEA OFFICIAL
EVEN EXPRESSED DOUBT TO US THAT SOVIET SUPPORT ON BANGLADESH
WOULD
HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE IF THE RECENT SUMMIT AGREEMENTS HAD BEEN
SIGNED IN 1971. AT THE SAME TIME, THE SOVIETS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS
APPEAR CONCERNED THAT THEIR OWN RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIA MAY
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BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED IF THE INDIANS BEGIN TREATING THE US AND
SOVIETS ON THE SAME TERMS. IT WILL BE SOME TIME BEFORE THE SUMMIT
REVERBERATIONS PLAY THEMSELVES OUT HERE. WE EXPECT THAT OVER THE
NEXT FEW MONTHS THE INDIANS WILL BE LOOKING FOR EVIDENCE OF SOVIET
REASSURANCES AND THAT THE SOVIE
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